

CITY OF SPRINGVILLE

CITY COUNCIL

JANUARY 25, 2021

The City Council of the City of Springville met in a virtual workshop session as allows by Governor Ivey's COVID-19 emergency declaration on Monday, January 25, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. with Mayor Dave Thomas presiding.

Those members answering present to roll call were as follows:

District 1 – Councilmember Toles
District 2 – Councilmember Vinson
District 3 – Councilmember Tucker
District 4 – Councilmember Katrina Hennings
District 5 – Councilmember Tim Walker (connected after roll call)
District 6 – Councilmember Marshall Parker (connected after roll call)
District 7 – Councilmember Sherry Reaves
Mayor Dave Thomas

Mayor Thomas stated he knew it was typical to introduce a budget at one meeting and adopt it at another, but since time is of the essence, he stated he passed out a copy of the budget before the Council tonight earlier today. He apologized for the late delivery of this revised budget. He stated this budget includes some new employee positions and reflects a 2.5% cost of living increase for employees.

Councilmember Reaves noted that the salary line item was increased in some departments, but not in others in this new budget.

Councilmember Toles stated, before the Council did not accept the budget because the cost of paying employee insurance was not included. He stated we need to look at this.

Mayor Thomas stated our revenues for the first quarter are on track to meet the revenues in the budget projections. There was enough to do a COLA or insurance, but not both. He stated he felt these were conservative and we could increase the revenues shown to cover any additional items.

Councilmember Toles stated he saw that this budget has \$45,000 in contractor services and a CityScapes department. He asked could that money be put toward insurance?

Mayor Thomas stated that money is for cutting fields and the Cityscapes is for right-of-way, city property and signs.

Councilmember Toles asked could we move the equipment money in the new department to the parks?

Councilmember Reaves stated, if we continue to have the Park employees cut the parks, we could eliminate \$158,000 for the CityScapes Department and save.

Mayor Thomas stated that would go against a campaign promise that he made.

Councilmember Vinson agreed with Councilmember Reaves. He stated the \$45,000 is not just for cutting the fields. It is also for pre-emergent, herbicide and pesticide treatments. He stated he did not know the law, but he was not in favor of increasing revenues just to cover things we want. It needs to be reasonable.

Mayor Thomas stated this is a balanced budget with \$29,000 to spare as presented. Revenues are on track.

Councilmember Vinson pointed out that we are on track after the holidays, but revenues decrease after that.

Councilmember Toles stated we have all of these resolutions added to the agenda tonight to hire new people, but we are not helping our current employees.

Councilmembers Reaves and Vinson agreed.

Councilmember Toles stated if we have \$45,000 in the parks to cut grass and a request for two more people, but if the CityScapes people cut all of the grass, will he use these people?

Mayor Thomas replied no. They will be busy taking care of the ballparks if we cancel the contract. The CityScapes department will take care of the right-of-way and signs, not ball fields. He stated the amount in the park line item is \$35,000, not \$45,000.

Councilmember Toles stated his copy says \$45,000.

Mayor Thomas stated he put out a new revised budget this afternoon, and it says \$35,000.

Councilmember Walker asked what the 14% growth in revenues was based upon?

Mayor Thomas stated there is no place to go but up after the economy crash.

Councilmember Walker stated based upon his work with federal and state contracts, the anticipated economic recovery in 2021 is only 2.6%.

Mayor Thomas stated we have to make an investment in the community to see results. A budget is only a guide. If we can't make these budget figures, we can adjust them later.

Councilmember Walker asked what the 10% sales tax increase was based on?

Mayor Thomas stated we have done great during COVID, plus we will have a \$238,000 grant with only \$150,000 to be spent toward COVID expenses in this budget.

Chief Harvey stated this \$238,000 is a reimbursement for COVID money we have already spent, not really a grant. Part of this money was spent in last fiscal year and part has been spent in this fiscal year.

Councilmember Walker stated he thinks that revenues are overstated.

Councilmember Tucker stated we would need to see new businesses to generate new revenues. That is what we need to look at.

Mayor Thomas stated he can't guarantee new business is coming, but he is talking to people.

Councilmember Reaves stated times are hard right now. She stated she was nervous to step out right now.

Mayor Thomas asked why are we talking about concerns about the budget, when you are asking for a raise and insurance for employees?

Councilmember Reaves stated she felt the employees should come first.

Councilmember Toles asked do we need all of this new stuff right now? He stated for twenty years we have been passing on insurance costs to employees. We need to look at this now.

Mayor Thomas stated the new positions were requested by the departments so they were included in the budget. Chief Harvey needs to restructure his department and will need a new employee. Too many city employees wear too many hats. We need to get someone in to train to take over some responsibilities. If we do this investment, we will get return on the back end. The City Clerk is part time and needs to train someone to move into this position when she leaves. Asa needs someone in the Building department as he is doing Building and IT. We are short-staffed in court. Parks has asked for a part-time and a full time laborer.

Councilmember Walker asked about removing the CityScapes, and Mayor Thomas replied, that is a non-starter, so let's move on.

Councilmember Toles suggested we go back to the departments to see what they want.

Mayor Thomas stated they are management. We are leadership, so lead.

Councilmember Toles stated he would like to see us cover employee insurance. The salary for the executive assistant for the Mayor is \$60,000.

Councilmember Vinson stated that is department head range.

Mayor Thomas replied, absolutely. A quality person is needed in this capacity.

Councilmember Walker stated he felt this is too much.

Councilmember Vinson stated this is not a department head position.

Mayor Thomas stated in name only, they will have responsibilities.

Councilmember Walker stated they should not be able to commit the city to anything.

Councilmember Reaves stated she feels like this is too much. She recommended Maranda Nolen be allowed to move to the position to assist the City Clerk and continue with zoning duties.

Mayor Thomas stated Maranda told him that her job ebbs and flows, but he does not want employees to have too many responsibilities. All of this is funded in the budget.

Councilmember Reaves stated the position of Mayor is part-time and she did not see hiring a full time executive assistant.

Mayor Thomas stated he is part-time in name only. This will help keep him on track. To be an effective Mayor, he said he needed an assistant. He stated he is setting the bar high for this employee and has high expectations.

Councilmember Walker stated 15% is an illogical fund base.

Mayor Thomas stated this is a balanced budget without going into reserves.

Councilmember Walker said, yes, with illogical increases it is balanced.

Councilmember Reaves asked Fire Chief Harvey if the two employees he requested were replacements or new positions, and he stated this will add to C shift and he will move Darnell to an administrative position. The part-time position will fill in while one employee is on military duty for four to five months, and to fill in shifts.

Councilmember Reaves asked Chief Harvey about the \$100,000 for a new vehicle, and could this be taken out, and us finance the vehicle when we receive it?

Chief Harvey stated we are not replacing a truck. The addition of the Sweetwater subdivision, requires a new fire station and equipment to service. If we ordered a new fire truck

today, it would be the first quarter of 2022 before it would be delivered. This truck will be \$550,000 to \$575,000. This is to equip the truck. It could be pulled out or added back next year when the truck is bought.

Councilmember Walker commented that there is \$945,000 in property purchases in this budget. He asked what we will do with this property.

Mayor Thomas stated that will be up to the Council. He stated he plans to put the library in the Crown Binder building. If we are going to preserve downtown, we need to control it.

Councilmember Walker stated it is not legal for the city to buy property to lease to others.

Mayor Thomas stated he had plans for the Springville Café and the Dairy Dip vacant property. He stated he planned to offer culinary classes since the café building has a kitchen. Arts classes and pottery classes could be done in the rest for cultural enhancement.

Councilmember Toles stated the Crown Binder building is old and needs to be torn down.

Mayor Thomas stated it would be inspected first.

Councilmember Walker asked City Attorney Charlie Waldrep what his thoughts were on this.

Attorney Waldrep stated that while the City cannot do some of these things, a Commercial Development Authority or Downtown Redevelopment Authority could. They could own the property and lease it as a separate entity from the city.

Councilmember Vinson stated, in his experience with old buildings and trying to repurpose them, that you can build a new building that better meets your needs for less money than it takes to renovate something that is never just right. Also, we need commercial development to enhance our tax base in downtown.

Councilmember Walker agreed that it would cost more to renovate this building than to build a new building.

Councilmember Reaves stated she was told it would take \$1 million to renovate that building.

Mayor Thomas stated he was trying to appease the Historical Committee and Preservation Committee. If the building does not meet the inspection, we could back up.

Councilmember Tucker stated that building is 70-80 years old and mortar deteriorates after fifty years.

Mayor Thomas stated if the Council wishes to pursue knocking it down and rebuilding, he would be okay with that.

Councilmember Toles stated you probably could not tear it down since it is in Historic Springville.

Mayor Thomas stated we could turn the corner into a parking lot for downtown.

Councilmember Reaves stated she did not agree with buying the building or moving the library, but we need revenue from commercial downtown.

Councilmember Tucker stated we have a parking lot 300 feet away and it is only full when we have parades. He stated he did not need a Council office. We can use the conference room or the break room, or they can come to his house. Why waste space and heating and air? Councilmembers Reaves and Hennings agreed.

Councilmember Toles stated he would like for someone else to buy them, and us get the revenues.

Mayor Thomas asked how long have these properties been empty and not sold?

Councilmember Toles stated they did not sell because the prices were too high.

Councilmember Reaves stated she understood there was a buyer for the Crown Binder building, but the city stopped it by stepping in.

Councilmember Hennings stated the Mayor said that the CityScapes department was not negotiable because he made a campaign promise. That is not a reason for us to approve it.

Mayor Thomas stated he promised this to the citizens who elected him. He told Councilmember Hennings that this was personal for some, but it will be done.

Councilmember Reaves stated she proposed taking it out.

Councilmember Hennings stated we are talking about a department, not about a person.

Mayor Thomas stated he made a promise to create CityScapes and to buy property.

Councilmember Vinson stated normally a horticulturist is under Parks and Recreation or Public Works.

Councilmember Toles stated we spent a lot of money on our library. Why do we want to move it and put more money into something else?

Mayor Thomas stated he did not think it was wise to put the library where it is now.

Councilmember Toles stated we had talked about building a new library at Big Springs Park at some time.

Councilmember Hennings agreed this was discussed, but we could not afford a new building.

Mayor Thomas stated this budget is a way to fulfill his vision and campaign promises.

Councilmember Toles asked are we going to table the budget since there is no agreement?

Mayor Thomas said we could change the agenda. He stated he was optimistic that we could adopt it tonight. He stated he was putting the ball back into the Council's court to give back to him.

Councilmember Vinson stated in the past we have had a budget committee. He asked was there a possibility to do this?

Mayor Thomas stated he had a vision that he ran on and achieved a 70% victory. This should speak to his vision and how to pay for it.

The workshop meeting was adjourned to that the regular meeting could begin.

The City Council of the City of Springville met in a rescheduled regular session in a virtual session as provided for in Governor Ivey's COVID-19 emergency declaration on Monday, January 25, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Dave Thomas presided and City Clerk Lynn Porter served as recording secretary. Mayor Thomas called the meeting to order.

Councilmember Wayne Tucker introduced Reverend Mike Ennis to lead in prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Those members answering present to roll call were as follows:

District 1 – Councilmember Toles
District 2 – Councilmember Vinson
District 3 – Councilmember Tucker
District 4 – Councilmember Katrina Hennings
District 5 – Councilmember Tim Walker
District 6 – Councilmember Marshall Parker
District 7 – Councilmember Sherry Reaves
Mayor Dave Thomas

The minutes of the January 4, 2021 meeting were introduced. Councilmember Toles moved they be approved, seconded by Councilmember Hennings, and the vote was unanimous.

The agenda was presented. Item D on the budget and items H-P on new employees and a new department were removed from the agenda. Councilmember Reaves moved the agenda be approved as amended, seconded by Councilmember Vinson, and the vote was unanimous.

Councilmember Vinson moved the accounts payable list provided to the City Council be approved, seconded by Councilmember Walker and the vote was unanimous.

Councilmember Parker stated he talked with the Parks director about getting a backstop for the ballfield. We need to get this up before the windows get broken. She has a quote on it from Try Me Fencing, who is local and doing other fencing in the park, in the amount of \$2,800.

Mayor Thomas asked was this in the budget?

Ashley replied it can wait until the budget is adopted if needed.

Councilmember Parker stated it will cost more to replace the windows than for the backstop. We need to get this done before spring practice begins.

Mayor Thomas asked could we just board up the windows instead.

Councilmember Parker stated that will cost to have them boarded up also. We need to just put up the backstop.

Councilmember Hennings asked do we need an emergency declaration for this.

Councilmember Toles asked that this be added to the agenda.

Councilmember Hennings asked for an update on the sewer construction.

Mayor Thomas stated the construction ends at Village Springs Road. It was supposed to continue to Murphees Valley Road before to get to a manhole, and tie into the city system.

Councilmember Walker stated he thought the agreement said it would tie into the lift station.

Public Works Director Earl Peoples stated the next phase won't be started until we see if the right-of-way moves on Murphees Valley Road. If so, it will go to the lift station.

Councilmember Tucker stated he was told twice that the City would never have to deal with it.

Mr. Peoples said the 60% construction approval drawings will show if the right-of-way changes or not. After we know this, then we will start phase 2.

Councilmember Hennings asked do we see a chance to issue certificates of occupancy?

Councilmember Parker stated he opposed it until the area is cleaned up. He said he has a lot of upset people over the mess in his district.

Mr. Peoples stated they have only received one draw. There is still a lot of money left in the contract. Everything is working well. The lines have good pressure, and the relief valves are installed.

Attorney Waldrep stated no emergency declaration is necessary on the backstop. He continued on the topic of the budget, if the Council sends their budget recommendations to a majority of the members, the Attorney General has ruled that this is a violation of the open meetings act as exchanges between members should take place in public.

Mayor Thomas stated this is a working document and not a subject for consideration.

Attorney Waldrep stated the exchange of information between members outside of a public discussion is the issue.

Councilmember Toles asked what about sending this to the City Clerk, and was told the information could be sent to the Mayor or City Clerk.

Resolution 2021-02 was presented extending COVID leave to city employees through March 31, 2021. The City Clerk explained that the federal declaration that gave 80 additional hours of sick leave to employees impacted by COVID-related absences without having to use their regular accumulated sick leave, expired on December 31, 2020. The City is extending this leave through March by this resolution. Councilmember Reaves moved this resolution be approved, seconded by Councilmember Hennings and the vote was unanimous.

Resolution 2021-03 was presented authorizing ALDOT to perform maintenance on concrete pavement and guardrails on the Interstate through Springville from Argo to WalMart. Councilmember Tucker stated when a project goes through a city, ALDOT must get their permission.

Councilmember Toles pointed out that the old Mayor's name is on this document and asked could it be changed. He moved this resolution be adopted, seconded by Councilmember Walker, and the vote was unanimous.

Discussion followed about establishing a Safety Drop Off Zone. This would provide a safe place to exchange goods or to exchange child custody.

Councilmember Toles asked where this would be and was told it will be in front of the police station.

Chief Walton stated the area will be marked and will have video cameras and lighting. He said some other cities have done this.

Councilmember Reaves said Mr. Wade Lowman of District 7 submitted this idea to her.

Chief Walton stated the cameras are not but \$400 each and we will need lights and signs. The area will be under 24-hour surveillance.

An ordinance to establish the speed limit on Walker Drive from Highway 11 to Industrial Drive at 20 miles per hour was presented. Councilmember Tucker stated normally when building a road the speed limit is calculated based on the road curvature and width giving the design speed. Based on that, this road probably should not be more than 15-20 miles per hour.

Chief Walton stated some business owners have come to him about excessive speeds on this road and Industrial Drive. We have a doctor's office, public works, the police department and fire department at City Hall and Butler Trailers all with cars pulling in and out, and we have people cutting through to avoid the four-way at high speeds.

Councilman Tucker moved for unanimous consent to suspend the rules of procedure to allow for the immediate consideration of Ordinance 2021-01 establishing the speed limit on Walker Drive at 20 miles per hour, seconded by Councilmember Parker, and upon a roll call vote, the results were as follows:

Yeas: Councilmembers Toles, Vinson, Tucker, Walker Hennings, Parker, and Reaves, and Mayor Thomas

Nays: None

Councilmember Tucker then moved Ordinance 2021-01 be adopted as presented, seconded by Councilmember Toles, and upon a roll call vote, the results were as follows:

Yeas: Councilmembers Toles, Vinson, Tucker, Walker Hennings, Parker, and Reaves, and Mayor Thomas

Nays: None

Attorney Waldrep stated since the rules are already suspended, the Council could choose to go ahead and adopt the next ordinance, if they so chose.

Councilmember Tucker, with the rules still suspended, moved Ordinance 2021-02 establishing the speed limit on Industrial Drive from Marietta Road (Highway 174 to Walker Drive

at 20 miles per hour, seconded by Councilmember Toles, and upon a roll call vote, the results were as follows:

Yeas: Councilmembers Toles, Vinson, Tucker, Walker Hennings, Parker, and Reaves, and Mayor Thomas

Nays: None

Attorney Waldrep stated we now need a motion to return to the regular meeting.

Councilmember Reaves moved the Council return to the regular meeting, seconded by Councilmember Vinson, and upon a roll call vote, the results were as follows:

Yeas: Councilmembers Toles, Vinson, Tucker, Walker Hennings, Parker, and Reaves, and Mayor Thomas

Nays: None

Councilmember Toles moved that the Police Department be allowed to purchase a new radar unit for a patrol car at a cost of \$1,500, seconded by Councilman Tucker.

Chief Walton stated this radar unit is 14-15 years old and has been repaired once, but cannot be fixed. This patrolman no longer has a unit in his car. The vote to approve the purchase was unanimous.

Mayor Thomas stated he did not anticipate the push back on the budget.

Councilmember Reaves stated 180 Church gives back to the community the offering from the first of the year. This offering went to our Senior Center.

Mayor Thomas stated he understood 180 Church is about to build at the Interstate, next to where the Ford dealership will be coming.

Councilmember Reaves stated that property is not in the City.

Mayor Thomas stated this is an Oneonta dealership that is building.

Chief Walton stated the Police Department and Senior Citizens' Center and Burtons have partnered to help our Seniors. Seniors can call their grocery orders in to Burtons, and they will pull the groceries and bag them. The Police Department goes to the home and gets the money and then picks up and delivers the groceries.

Councilmember Toles confirmed that our February 1 meeting will be in person at City Hall and was told yes, pending any unforeseen changes.

Councilmember Toles asked were Council pictures going to be made that night and was told yes. He asked the time of the work session, and Councilmember Reaves suggested 5:00 p.m.

Councilmember Walker asked could the link to the meeting be put into the agenda?

Chief Harvey stated it can be put in an e-mail. He reported the new cameras are up in the Council Chambers, and hopefully we have them automated to connect through the website.

Councilmember Reaves asked will the meeting be recorded, and was told yes. It is recorded now, but future meetings will be archived on the city web site.

Mayor Thomas stated this is part of the reason for the hire in the Building Department, so this clerk can take care of some of the administrative responsibilities and free Asa up to do more.

Councilmember Vinson stated Park Director Ashley Hay is in Orange Beach to accept an award as Young Professional of the Year.

Chief Harvey cautioned everyone to be weather aware as there is a tornado watch in St. Clair County.

Chief Walton stated there will be a promotion ceremony for Michael Long to Police Lieutenant at the Middle School tomorrow at 10:00 a.m.

No other business coming before the Council, a motion was made to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn B. Porter
City Clerk